

Programming Subcommittee: Policy Recommendations

MOTION #1: To promote aggressive strategies to simplify and streamline current regulatory policies.

Needs and Problems Identified

There is a critical need to address the backlog and burdensome processes related to personnel policies and procedures, as well as contracts and procurement, in the District of Columbia government. Several agencies have reported that exhaustive internal review procedures and regulations prevent them from having a competitive advantage in the recruitment and hiring process. YSA, for example, has reported that it took 18 (eighteen) months to hire MSW clinical staff members. Salary is often not the only barrier to hiring, but, also, a backlog in personnel review. "Residency preference" status (practice which allows individuals who have lived in the District for a 5 year period in the past to invoke a preferential status) also undermines opportunities to hire individuals who may bring unique qualifications and expertise from other jurisdictions.

Contracts and procurement is another area in which regulations inhibit the introduction of best practices and innovative strategies. The interval between the release of a Request for Proposals and the awarding of a contract is excessively long. Vendors are often frustrated because of the timetable, which in some cases has taken up to two years. By the time that a contract is awarded, it is not unusual to find that needs have changed and that the contracted service is not necessarily appropriate to the problem or issue that it was intended to address.

The obtuse process for awarding contracts has many implications for agency performance, as several agencies have severely constricted purchasing power as well. Agency directors often cannot secure the equipment, skills, or resources reflected in their budget because of the operational practices which force them to go through a centralized contracts and procurement process.

Recommendations

Therefore, the Commission recommends that the Mayor pursue strategies to streamline the regulatory process in the areas of personnel and contracts and procurement. Decentralization of these processes, in particular, could better equip children and youth-serving agencies with the authority to implement programs and policies in a swift manner, as is often the case in other jurisdictions.

MOTION #2: To recommend that the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) and Court Social Services (CSS) design and implement critically-needed “front end” diversion opportunities.

Needs and Problems Identified

A review of commitment data from the Department of Human Services indicates that children and youth are being committed at excessive levels. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of offenses for which juveniles were committed in the period between June 16, 2000 and June 15, 2001 covered Part 1 categories as defined by the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reporting System. Approximately one-third (1/3) of non-violent committing offenses were drug-related. Prevailing best practices suggest that these children are better served in the community.

An important context shaping trends in commitment is the extent to which opportunities exist to divert youth from further involvement with the juvenile justice system. Elliott (1996) and Dryfoos (1990) report that substance abuse prevention and treatment is critically important at an early stage, in order to address risk factors associated with later involvement with violent and more serious crime. Court-initiated diversion strategies have consistently eroded over the past few years, thereby increasing the number of youth who progress through the juvenile justice system. According to the 2000 Annual Report of the District of Columbia Courts, the disposition of diversion cases for juveniles decreased by 19.9% between 1999 and 2000. The decline in opportunities for diversion was also not proportionate to the noted decline in total cases, which fell by 3.4%. According to the most recent data supplied by the Court, forty-nine (49%) percent of juveniles who entered Intake also have cases pending.

Recommendations

Therefore, the Commission recommends that the Executive Branch work with the Judiciary to address the following:

- Development of more specialized diversion programs and practices, with special attention to status offenses (e.g., truancy, curfew violation, PINS, etc....), substance abuse prevention and treatment, domestic and sexual abuse counseling, and abuse and neglect. These should be implemented in partnership with community-based organizations and entities utilizing recognized “best practices” found in other jurisdictions. It is essential that personnel be trained in all these areas in order to be successful.
- Systematic reporting, analysis, and evaluation of diversion practices.

- Establishment of a critical examination and more refined demographic analysis and reporting of intake and diversion data, including offense, age, race, ethnicity, ward, gender, and sex. A comprehensive study must be conducted to determine whether or not discriminatory practices exist at the point of diversion. Statistics as to race and ethnicity of offenders shows a total absence of non-minority arrests.
- Updating of resource manuals and established protocols for diversion.

Motion #3: To recommend the continuation of plans to construct a secure juvenile facility at Mt. Olivet site for pre-trial and pre-disposition youth; and, demolition of Oak Hill and building of a facility for committed youth.

Needs and Problems Identified:

Current facility at Oak Hill houses short-term pre-trial youth and committed youth. According to annual caseloads statistics from the period of June 16, 2000 to June 15, 2001, a total of 615 youths were adjudicated and committed. The average daily population (ADP) consisted of 486 youth and of this average, a total of 434 were male and 52 female; 470 African American and 16 Latino. The average age was 17.5 years. Youth who were committed during this period predominantly resided in 3 wards in the District of Columbia: Ward 7 (n 91), Ward 8 (n 83) and Ward 5 (n 65); these wards constitute 49.2% of the total. The committing offenses ranged from persons in need of supervision (PINS, n 15) to murder 1 (n 1) and murder 2 (n 5).

In conjunction with requirements outlined in Jerry M., there is a call for providing a secure facility for committed youth complemented by a series of community based residential facilities. A strong commitment must be made *not* to commit PINS at the secure facility.

Therefore, to be in compliance with Jerry M. and in the spirit of providing for the needs of pre-trial and committed youth in addition to youth placed out- of- District, three activities must occur:

Proceed with plans to construct 80 bed¹ facility for pre-trial detention, a police processing center, court social services intake with a community services component at current recommended site;

- Close and demolish current Oak Hill facility after a projection for the number of secure beds is analyzed and after a new secure facility for committed youth is ready for occupancy; and

Process current request for proposals for community-based residential treatment facilities for PINS and committed youth immediately to assess out- of- District youth² for appropriate placement. This activity should be overseen by the proposed Youth Services Commission and should be conducted on an ongoing basis.

¹ 80 beds take into account youth out- of- District placement

² Currently, there are over 120 out- of- District youth as of June 2001.

Recommendations

Therefore, the Commission recommends that the Mayor pursue the proposed plan of constructing a secure facility for pre-trial and pre-disposition and a new secure facility for committed youth, with all deliberate speed.

Motion #4: To recommend development, implementation, and evaluation of various strategies utilized in community supervision for probation and aftercare to include utilization of case managers³.

Needs and Problems Identified

Development, implementation, and evaluation of an intensive strategy for adjudicated youth under supervision by authorities in the community are imperative. Numerous studies have shown that adjudicated youth's involvement in structured community activities (i.e. school, work, volunteerism, and community service) contribute to reducing recidivism. D.M. Alschuler (1994) and T.L. Armstrong (1996) have also shown that the first 3 months of an offender's release from a secure correctional setting are the most crucial in determining whether or not reintegration will be successful.

Strategies should include:

- Wraparound services (i.e. chemical dependency treatment, specialized family counseling, and mental health services)
- Transition to a community based residential program if deemed necessary
- Return to schools and the community, and
- Employment opportunities.

Additionally, this strategy should address:

- Public protection
- Victim rights
- Youth accountability.

To achieve these efforts, specialized training should be provided so that the staff is proficient, both conceptually and operationally, in the integration of graduated sanctions with traditional community supervision practices.

Recommendations

The Commission recommends that the Mayor pursue all funding opportunities and technical assistance for supervision and aftercare services with the Office of Justice Programs. Further recommendations are subject to review by the District of Columbia Youth Commission.

³ Division of Youth Services, State of Missouri defines its Aftercare Program to include "...virtually all young offenders [who] are placed on aftercare status when they leave an intensive treatment program. In aftercare, case managers provide supervision and services to help the youth successfully return to life in the community. Case managers reinforce skills the youth learn in treatment and provide guidance and supervision as necessary. They may serve as counselors or supervisors to the youth or may refer to them to appropriate services in the community."

MOTION #5: To implement proposal for construction of new secure juvenile facility to replace Oak Hill.

Needs and Problems Identified.

The objective is to create on the Oak Hill site a model secure facility for youth offenders with a principal focus on rehabilitation and preparation for integration into community life as a responsible citizen. The facility would be developed based on the most successful youth offender rehabilitation facilities throughout the country, such as those visited in Missouri and Texas. The facility would be large enough to house all youth offenders in the District so as to eliminate the current practice of sending some offenders to distant facilities. But it would be limited to those who have committed serious offenses requiring secure detention. Status offenders, PINs cases, and others would be handled in community-based facilities.

The current Oak Hill site is suitable for the new model secure facility. It is easily accessible from the District, yet it is in a rural setting that would not disturb neighborhoods. It may be desirable to change the name in order to reflect the new approach, and more limited focus of the facility's mission.

It is vital that the restructuring of Oak Hill occur rapidly, since it would be such a visible and concrete element of program reform. The inordinate delay in developing the Mt. Olivet site (admittedly a different situation because of its location in the City) reinforces the need for a different approach to the replacement of Oak Hill.

That task should be the direct responsibility of the new Youth Services Commission recommended by the Governance subcommittee. The Commission should be given the necessary authority to override existing laws as necessary to assure completion of the project within the time frame described below. This should be treated as a special project much like a wartime project or a court-ordered decree. We seek to avoid the delays so frequently associated with government-sponsored projects, which engender disputes over sites, contractors, designs, program goals, environmental impact, etc. Here, the urgency of the need justifies a "no-delay" strategy.

We envision the Youth Services Commission selecting a contractor to prepare a detailed facility plan within six months, and a consortium of contractors to carry out the physical construction plan within two years of Commission acceptance of the plan. While construction is underway, the Commission would commission appropriate actions by the responsible agencies so that the rehabilitation program would be ready to implement as soon as the construction is completed.

Recommendation:

The Commission recommends that the Mayor charge the Youth Services Commission with the responsibility for replacing the facility at the Oak Hill site to a model secure facility for youth offenders, and that the laws be amended as necessary to permit completion of the project on an expedited basis. The facility must be designed with the intent of providing a rehabilitative

environment and culture conducive to treating children as children, and also contribute to a substantial increase in staff recruitment, training and retention.

MOTION #6: To recommend the continuation of securing community-based residential treatment facilities in the District of Columbia for PINS and committed youth needing such services and develop and implement a work plan for returning youth from out- of- District placements.

Needs and Problems Identified:

Due to insufficient treatment beds in the District of Columbia and the requirements outlined in the **Jerry M** Consent Decree, it has been necessary for Youth Services Administration to place youth in residential treatment facilities throughout the country. This has had a negative impact on the youth, families and the District of Columbia. Such placements have required youth to be separated from families for extended periods of time, making family counseling virtually impossible. The high cost of housing youth in these programs in addition to the high cost of monitoring such programs for service delivery, makes this an undesirable practice. As of June 2001, there were 120 out- of- District youth in various programs.

It should be the responsibility of the proposed Youth Services Commission, in conjunction with the Youth Administration Services to complete the following action steps within 6 months of the Mayor's approval to proceed.

- Complete an assessment of the current monitoring protocols for community-residential programs and if needed, develop and implement a Quality Assurance Plan to ensure that programs are monitored for services provided to out- of- District youth.
- Complete a review of all Individualized Treatment Plans and progress notes for all out- of- District youth in community residential treatment facilities and assess the specialized treatment and supervision needs for all youth.
- Assess the current procurement process involving all current Request for Proposals for Community-Residential Facilities in the District of Columbia and establish a plan of action for streamlining through recommended regulatory reform.
- Submit a plan of action for the timely return of out- of- District youth based on established written criteria to address public and youth safety and reintegration back into the community.
- Submit a plan of action for the creation, establishment and/or replication of "best practices" with regard to treatment modalities for community-based residential treatment facilities.
- Submit a plan of action outlining strategies for establishing community partnerships with stakeholders, such as universities, faith based organizations, health care, law enforcement, youth advocacy and neighborhood organizations.

- Submit a plan of action outlining utilization of available resources to complete this task and provide, if needed a list of additional resources, i.e. equipment, personnel, and funds. Additional resources should be justified through a needs assessment.

Recommendations

Therefore, the Commission recommends that the Mayor pursue the proposed plan of addressing the urgent need for community-based residential facilities for youth by charging the proposed Youth Services Commission with the responsibility of overseeing and expediting the procurement process by working closely with Youth Services Administration on an on-going basis.

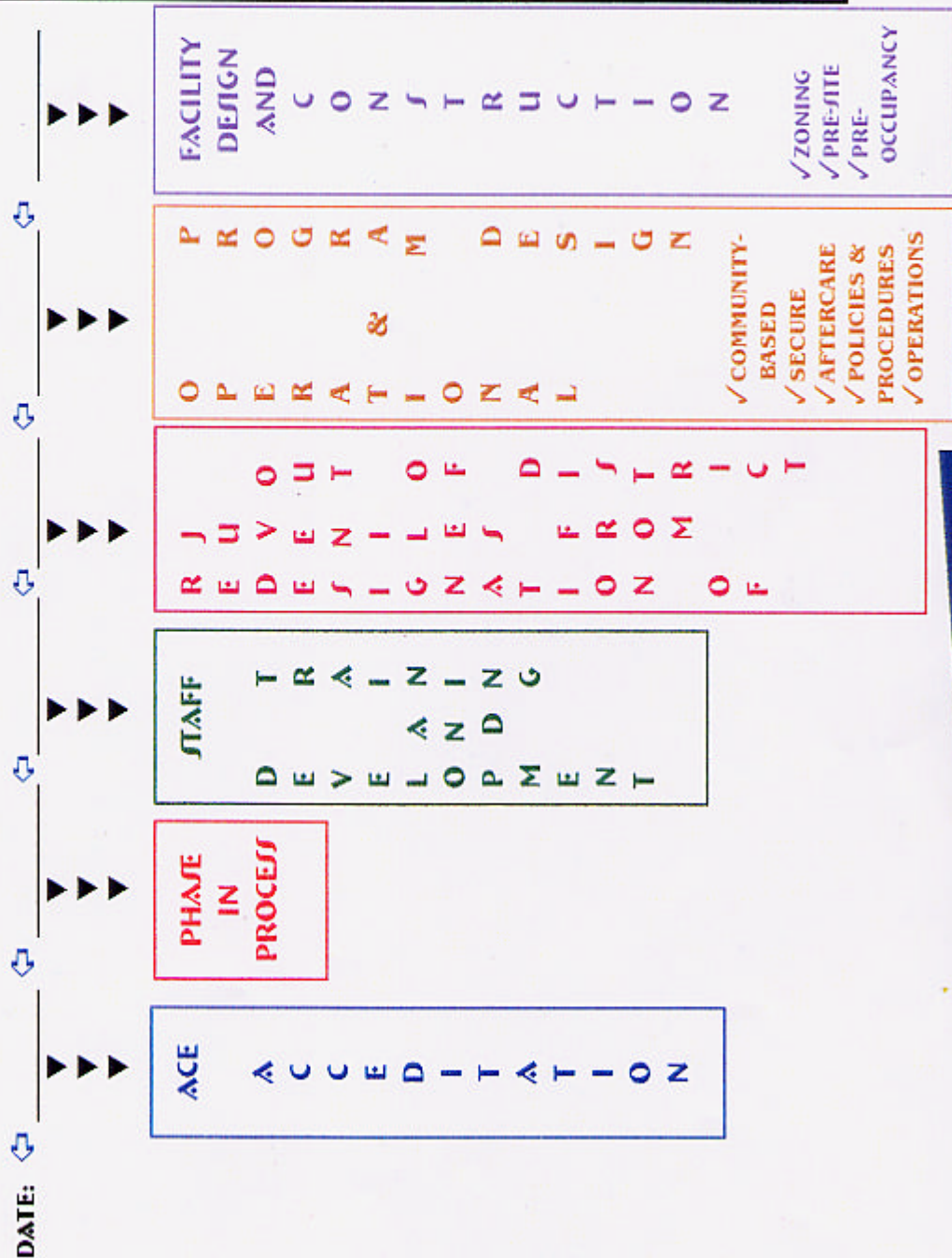
MILESTONES FOR SECURE AND COMMUNITY-BASED JUVENILE FACILITIES

DATE: _____

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OAK HILL

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MILESTONES FOR SECURE AND COMMUNITY-BASED JUVENILE FACILITIES

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FACILITY DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION ✓ ZONING ✓ PRE-SITE ✓ PRE-OCCUPANCY		OPERATIONAL & PROGRAM DESIGN ✓ COMMUNITY-BASED ✓ SECURE ✓ AFTERCARE ✓ POLICIES & PROCEDURES ✓ OPERATIONS		REDEVELOPMENT OF JUVENILES FROM OUT OF DISTRICT		STAFF TRAINING DEVELOPMENT		PHASE IN PROCESS		ACCREDITATION		SUNSET OAK HILL DATE: <u> </u>	

